

# REFERENCE DEPARTMENT GUIDELINES

## *PURPOSE OF REFERENCE POLICY STATEMENT*

University at Buffalo  
University at Buffalo Libraries  
Buffalo, New York

### Purpose Statement

The purpose of this policy statement is to provide the staff with a compendium of information policies that promote a uniform standard of service of the highest possible quality consistent with available resources.

This statement is designed both to orient new staff and be an information resource for more experienced staff. The statement may be made available to any library user if s/he has a question concerning the service policy of the Department.

University of Texas Austin  
University of Texas Libraries  
Austin, Texas

### Purpose of Guidelines for Reference and Information Services

These guidelines describe the levels and forms of reference and information services that are offered by the University of Texas Libraries and are intended to insure a uniform standard of the highest quality in all public service units, despite the diverse size, resources, staff, and clientele of the various units. They are also a source of information concerning library policy and procedures. They are to be used in conjunction with the Reference Collections Policy and other related policies and publications of the University of Texas Libraries.

## *PHILOSOPHY OF SERVICE*

University at Albany  
University Libraries  
Albany, New York

### Philosophy of Service

The provision of high quality, individualized reference services to any library user who asks for assistance is central to our philosophy. In carrying out this philosophy, we adhere to the following principles:

A helpful and welcoming attitude is essential to the provision of quality reference service.

**Accuracy of information:** Accuracy is an important goal of reference service, but the accuracy of published information cannot be guaranteed due to the limitations of available resources and the subject knowledge of individual librarians. It is the library user's responsibility to use judgment in interpreting and using information provided by a reference librarian.

**Medical and legal questions:** Reference librarians assist users to find the information they need. They do not interpret the law, nor advise library users on legal matters or medical matters.

## THE ACADEMIC LIBRARY MANAGER'S FORMS, POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES HANDBOOK

Intellectual freedom: Reference librarians provide assistance without bias.

Equity of library users: In general, each individual asking a question will be treated equally in terms of thoroughness and attention. If a library user who is not affiliated with the University requires extensive assistance at a time when other users need assistance, the librarian must use judgment to ensure that the needs of affiliated users are being met.

Privacy: The privacy of users' queries is respected. Discussion among reference librarians of users' queries is appropriate when seeking a colleague's advice on best sources, or when a question and its answer are instructive for other librarians who work at the reference desk.

Rutgers University  
Rutgers University Libraries  
Newark, New Jersey

### Service Definitions

Information Service—Basic/general information can be provided by librarians, staff, or trained student assistants—in person, by telephone, by electronic mail either to individual librarians or staff or through Ask a Librarian, or by the use of signs, printed or online finding aids and guides, and such electronic resources as IRIS, online indexes and other basic reference tools, and the Libraries' Web pages. It addresses the more routine information needs of patrons, including:

- Library holdings and bibliographic citations

- Library policies (e.g., Admission to the libraries, borrowing, interlibrary loan)

- Library hours/directions

- Ready reference (e.g., Brief definitions, brief statistical data, other concise factual information)

Reference Service—Reference service is provided by all the Rutgers libraries. Professional librarians provide the most in-depth service; highly trained staff or graduate assistants under the supervision of professional librarians may provide other levels of service. Reference Service may take place at the reference desk, in private consultations with reference specialists, by telephone, by correspondence, or by electronic mail either to individual librarians or staff or through Ask a Librarian.

Reference Service also includes the development and implementation of printed and online finding aids and research guides, computer systems, and user interfaces to support independent research and end-user searching.

Since the Rutgers University Libraries are part of an educational institution, reference service is often appropriately instructional in nature, fostering the client's information literacy and self-sufficiency by instruction in the methods of research, the tools of research (both printed and electronic), and the ability to evaluate the quality and relevance of the research material retrieved. Reference Service includes instruction in the use of bibliographic sources, assistance in developing research strategies, assistance in locating complex data, the retrieval of data through electronic means, etc.

At other times, especially in the smaller and more specialized of the Rutgers Libraries, or in cases involving clients with special needs, reference service might more appropriately take the form of providing factual answers or retrieving and packaging bibliographic or statistical data. In many instances, reference assistance involves the use of electronic resources available on either networked or standalone workstations or from such fee-based vendors as Dialog or STN. See Appendix 2 for detailed information about the Rutgers Online Automated Retrieval Service (ROARS).

The mission of the library, the needs of the client, and the professional judgment of the reference librarian will usually determine the appropriate level of service.

### Whom We Serve, and Why

The primary community served by the Rutgers University Libraries consists of current faculty, faculty emeritus, students, staff, and administrators of Rutgers University.

## REFERENCE DEPARTMENT GUIDELINES

The Libraries' reference and information services are available to all individuals on site, by telephone, by correspondence, and through the online Ask a Librarian service.

The Libraries may engage in mutually beneficial contractual arrangements. These include referral services for the New Jersey Library Network, METRO libraries, OCLC, and the Research Libraries Group. These reciprocal arrangements provide the needed services for Rutgers users who cannot have their needs met within the Rutgers libraries. The Libraries also provide services to certain university affiliates.

Reference service provided by a Rutgers library as a professional courtesy to outside users (other librarians, independent researchers, etc.) does not take the place of services provided by their primary library—whether school, public, academic, or special. In many instances, it will be appropriate to ascertain that outside users have already exhausted the resources of those libraries, or to refer such clients to other appropriate libraries, especially when we do not have the specialized resources needed or the professional expertise to handle their queries.

University at Buffalo  
University at Buffalo Libraries  
Buffalo, New York

Reference, information and instructional services are some of the most vital and visible expressions of the purpose and mission of the Libraries, and are key to the Libraries' role as a learning space for students, faculty, staff and the community. ASL faculty and staff provide a variety of services to meet the informational and instructional needs of library users, within the limits of time, staffing, resources and the professional judgment of staff. The overall goal of ASL Reference and Information Services is to provide services to information seekers when and where they need it, in real-time whenever possible. In all of our activities, we value:

Approachability

Accuracy

Information literacy—Teaching library users the process of articulating an information need, and then identifying, finding and evaluating the information to meet that need. See the ACRL Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education (<http://www.ala.org/ala/acrl/acrlstandards/standards.pdf>).

A proactive approach—Initiating the reference process and encouraging library users to ask for assistance.

Intellectual freedom

Equity—To consider each individual information query to be of equal merit regardless of the age, gender, ethnicity, disability, sexual preference or English language proficiency of the person asking the question.

Informed Referrals

Confidentiality

Expertise and Knowledge

Librarians also conduct themselves according to the Code of Ethics of the American Library Association

### *MISSION STATEMENT*

University at Albany  
University Libraries  
Albany, New York

#### Mission Statement

The primary goal of reference service is to provide excellent services to assist users with their educational and research needs. To achieve this goal, reference librarians provide research assistance and answer reference questions, both to users in the library, and remotely through telephone and e-mail services.

## THE ACADEMIC LIBRARY MANAGER'S FORMS, POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES HANDBOOK

The objectives of the service are:

- To provide individual assistance and instruction
- To provide and maintain an appropriate collection of reference resources, both print and electronic
- To educate users concerning resources and research techniques in order to help the users to become information literate

State University of New York Cortland  
Memorial Library  
Cortland, New York

### Library Mission Statement

The library collects, organizes, disseminates, and facilitates access to information related to the intellectual and academic needs of the College community. The Library's services and educational programs promote information literacy and develop research skills. The Library's primary goal is to meet the curricular needs of undergraduate and graduate students. The Library uses both traditional means and new technologies to implement its programs and services, and to access and deliver information from all available sources.

## *GOALS AND OBJECTIVES*

Lane Community College  
Lane Community College Library  
Eugene, Oregon

### Library Purpose and Goals

In support of the stated goals and objectives of the College, the Library is developing a unified program of library-media resources and services. The purpose of this program is to enhance instruction and learning in a manner consistent with the philosophy and curriculum of Lane Community College. The Library is guided by the principles of the Library Bill of Rights in the development of its programs and services.

The goals of the Library are:

- To provide organized collections of print and non-print resources which will meet institutional and instructional requirements as well as the individual needs of students.
- To create an environment in which resources are made readily accessible, not only through the provision of appropriate facilities, furnishings, equipment, and supplies, but particularly through the provision of adequate staff.
- To facilitate learning and community services by providing services, resources and facilities which encourage and stimulate individualized instruction, independent study and effective use of resources by students, faculty and the community.

## *ACCESS ELIGIBILITY*

State University of New York Cortland  
Memorial Library  
Cortland, New York

### Service to Non-SUNY Cortland Users

Although SUNY Cortland faculty, students, and staff are the library's primary user group, Cortland community and other non-SUNY Cortland users may use the library's collections and services, as stated in general library policy. In the case of unusually time-consuming inquiries, or at times when the reference area is busy, the librarian may ask the user's affiliation, and may give priority to SUNY Cortland users. Generally, however, no distinction should be made, especially when the library has unique resources in

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staff and material which meet the information needs of the user. The library's agreement with the Federal Library Depository Program requires that reference service be provided to all library users seeking information about or assistance in using government documents.

University at Albany  
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Albany, New York

### Clientele

The University at Buffalo Arts & Sciences Libraries provide reference services for patrons affiliated with the University and patrons from the general public. No distinctions are made among different categories of library users when providing routine reference services. However, priority is given to UB-affiliated users when library resources, staffing, space, or funding are inadequate to meet the demands for reference services at any time. As participants in the depository program of the United States government, the University Libraries also fulfill their statutory obligation as a depository library by providing equal access to all documents materials for all users, without distinction and regardless of affiliation. The Arts & Sciences Libraries take primary responsibility for anticipating and meeting the research and information needs of constituents in the following University at Buffalo schools, colleges and programs:

- School of Architecture & Planning
- College of Arts & Sciences
- General Education Program
- Graduate School of Education
- School of Engineering & Applied Sciences
- School of Informatics
- School of Management
- School of Social Work

ASL services and collections are also intended to work within the University Libraries to serve the needs of faculty, staff and students from: Cora P. Maloney College, the University Honors and Scholars Program, selected UB Research Centers and Institutes and the Graduate School.

### *PATRON USE STATISTICS*

University of Indianapolis  
Krannert Memorial Library  
Indianapolis, Indiana

### Statistics

Routine statistics kept by the library:

- Book titles and volumes owned, added, and withdrawn—total and by Dewey category
- Active periodicals subscriptions
- Media owned, added, and withdrawn—by format
- Items circulated, both outside and as Reserves
- Library classes given and number of student participants
- ILL borrowing and lending requests and fills
- Bound/volumes of periodicals
- Microforms, by format

Other statistics may be generated using Aleph reports or manual counts.

## THE ACADEMIC LIBRARY MANAGER'S FORMS, POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES HANDBOOK

University of Wisconsin River Falls  
Chalmer Davee Library  
River Falls, Wisconsin

### Reference Desk Statistics

A. A daily record is maintained of all questions answered by reference staff at the Reference Desk. Three types of questions are recorded: reference, ready reference, and directional.

B. Reference Questions. An extended information contact which involves the use, recommendation, interpretation, or instruction in the use of one or more reference sources, or knowledge of such sources, by a reference staff member.

C. Ready Reference Questions. A reference question which can easily be answered by consulting one source, which generally can be completed in a short amount of time.

D. Directional Questions. A simple question that can be answered without consulting any library resource.

### *ROLE OF REFERENCE COLLECTION*

State University of New York Cortland  
Memorial Library  
Cortland, New York

#### The Reference Collection

##### General Statement

The library will maintain an up-to-date, relevant, and accessible collection of reference materials, including both traditional print materials and electronic resources. The in-house Reference Collection includes resources such as encyclopedias, dictionaries, handbooks, statistical sources, periodical abstracts and indexes, and other primary sources and finding tools commonly regarded as "reference tools." These reference tools are increasingly available in electronic formats, which will be made available whenever ease of use, cost, and accessibility permit.

The in-house Reference Collection is supplemented by external resources such as electronic databases available from commercial vendors and library agencies, online catalogs of other libraries, resources available through interlibrary loan, and other sources available through the Internet and other networks. Judgments about whether to purchase materials for in-house use or to rely on remote access are based on such factors as available resources, purchase cost, anticipated use, currency, and ease of use. Refer to the Collection Development Policy for further explanation. Reference bibliographers are responsible for evaluating reference materials and resources, and for recommending which should be acquired and which should be made accessible through external sources. The Librarian(s) in charge of Reference works with the bibliographers to evaluate and select materials and resources.

University at Albany  
University Libraries  
Albany, New York

##### General Purpose

The Reference collection is selected and acquired to support the research, teaching and information needs of the University at Albany community with emphasis placed on support of the academic programs in the social sciences and humanities at the main campus. This policy offers guidelines for the acquisition, retention, and scope of materials housed in the collection. The Reference collection includes sources that index or summarize information usually contained in the general circulating collection. All formats will be considered for inclusion in the Reference collection. The Reference collection is non-circulating.

Usefulness to reference librarians and to members of the University community is the principal criterion for inclusion of materials in the Reference collection. Highly esoteric, narrowly focused, and seldom used

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sources should not ordinarily be included in the collection, even though they may be arranged in a reference type of format. In order to provide accurate and current information, reference sources are continuously withdrawn and updated.

This Collection Development Policy also applies to the Libraries' Web-based Reference Collection, the contents of which reflect the research, teaching and information needs of the University Library as well as the Dewey and Science Libraries. Sites are primarily selected which are academic in nature. Overly commercial sites are excluded as well as those which duplicate the content of the Libraries' subscription databases. Subject areas not related to the University Curriculum are normally not included although a selection of recreational sites is also offered. An effort is made to make this collection usable by limiting the number of web titles on any given subject. An effort is made to exclude titles which substantially duplicate other web-site sources already contained in this collection.

### *REFERENCE COLLECTION COMPONENTS*

University at Albany  
University Libraries  
Albany, New York

#### Description of Materials Collected:

The Bibliographer for the University Library's Reference Collection makes decisions concerning selection, retention, and location of materials, in both hardcopy and electronic format, consulting with other bibliographers as appropriate. The Bibliographer consults with counterparts at the Dewey and Science Libraries when necessary, concerning the purchase of expensive and/or electronic resources in order to avoid the duplication of purchases.

#### Types of Materials Collected:

Almanacs, Annuals, and Yearbooks. Generally only the latest year is placed in the Reference collection. Foreign country almanacs are designated "latest issue in Reference." Earlier issues are sent to the general stacks of the University Library. Exceptions are made for backfiles of encyclopedic yearbooks and some annual review publications of a bibliographic nature.

Completed sets of the World Almanac and Statistical Abstract of the United States are retained in the Reference collection.

Bibliographies. Bibliographies that are general in nature and cover broad topics are housed in Reference. Single-author bibliographies and others that are narrow in scope are housed in the circulating stacks. Exception will be made for those bibliographies on topics in great demand or those of major literary figures, such as Shakespeare.

Only the latest year of United States and foreign trade bibliographies are retained.

Biographical Sources. Major international works, major national works and current biographical works (Who's Who) of every country from which they are available are retained in the Reference collection. Specialized dictionaries are considered on their individual merits and degree of use. Usually the most recent editions of biographical dictionaries are maintained in the Reference collection.

Concordances. Only concordances to the Bible and Shakespeare are kept in Reference.

Dictionaries. Most unilingual, bilingual and polyglot dictionaries for major languages are placed in Reference. Some local and regional language dictionaries are only housed in the general collection and are usually designated "building only." Historical dictionaries and specialized dictionaries, such as dictionaries of slang and subject dictionaries, may also be included in the Reference collection depending on their degree of use.

Directories. The Reference collection contains the latest edition of various types of directories which support Albany's academic programs and meet general information needs. Directories are acquired selectively. Older editions of some directories are shelved in the general collection.

## THE ACADEMIC LIBRARY MANAGER'S FORMS, POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES HANDBOOK

**Encyclopedias.** Major foreign language encyclopedias and the latest significantly revised editions of all major English-language encyclopedias, both single-volume and multi-volume, are housed in the Reference collection. Selected earlier editions of some foreign language encyclopedias are housed in the general collection. An attempt is made to update the general encyclopedias on a yearly rotating basis. The latest editions of frequently-consulted, single-subject, encyclopedias are maintained in Reference. If an older edition is considered to have significant value, it may be retained in the Reference collection beyond its period of currency.

**Geographical Sources.** A representative collection of major comprehensive atlases, gazetteers, and bound maps are included in the Reference collection including historical atlases, sources on major countries of the world and those sources which meet state and local information needs. Highly specialized sources will not ordinarily be included. Superseded editions of some atlases are housed in the general collection.

**Handbooks, Manuals and Guides.** A selection of up-to-date handbooks, manuals, and guides which meet general information needs or relate to the University's academic disciplines are retained in Reference. Amount of use is a key consideration in determining which titles are placed in the Reference collection and which are placed in the general collection.

**Indexes and Abstracts.** The Reference collection includes indexing and abstracting services relevant to the teaching, research, and general information needs of the University community. Many of these are provided in electronic format.

**Services.** Loose-leaf services on taxation, law and business are subscribed to and maintained in the Reference collection.

**Law.** The collection contains a selection of statute and case law for the United States and New York State.

**Other Materials:**

**Telephone Books.** Selected current telephone books are maintained in the Reference Collection including a large collection for New York State. Other U.S. and foreign directories are provided in electronic format.

**College Catalogs.** The collection includes a select hardcopy collection of local and regional college catalogs. Access to U.S. and foreign catalogs is provided electronically.

**Ready Reference.** A small number of materials within the Reference collection have the special designation, "Ready Reference," because they receive such frequent use and it is convenient to have them near the Reference Desk. Ready Reference materials which frequently disappear are housed in the Reserve Reading Room. Some titles are duplicated.

University of West Georgia  
University Library  
Carrollton, Georgia

### Types of Materials Included in the Reference Collection

Reference collection materials shall be supportive of the Library Collection Development Policy and shall be pertinent to the chronological, geographical, and subject scope of courses taught at the University of West Georgia. Supplemental materials outside these guidelines are also collected to maintain a viable information resource for the University community. Much of the Reference Collection is in the English language, but emphasis will also be placed on appropriate materials in any language which support the curriculum of the University of West Georgia.

The following list, which is illustrative not exhaustive, represents the types of materials collected for reference.

**Almanacs, Annuals, and Yearbooks:** Major national and international publications

**Bibliographies:** General, national, and trade bibliographies; Bibliographies with narrow subject scope are usually placed in the circulating collection.

**Biographical Sources:** National, international, and professional biographies, retrospective and current



## REFERENCE DEPARTMENT GUIDELINES

Dictionaries: Unilingual, bilingual, polyglot and specialized

Encyclopedias: Selected general and subject encyclopedias

Genealogy: Selected sources with a concentration on Georgia history

Geographical Sources: Selected authoritative country, specialized, and historical atlases, and gazetteers

Heraldry: A limited number of selected sources

Handbooks: Various subject areas that support the University curriculum

Indexes and Abstracts: Numerous subject and general indexes and abstracts with emphasis given to subjects which support the University curriculum

Legal Materials: Legal sources that support courses taught in business, education, and constitutional law; basic United States and Georgia legal materials

Quotations: Major collections in English

State and Local Information: Georgia and Carroll County

Statistical Sources: Selected national and international materials

Style Manuals: Recent editions of selected manuals

Other Materials: Information sources based on usefulness to primary users and perceived need.

State University of New York Cortland

Memorial Library

Cortland, New York

### Ready Reference

The Ready Reference Collection, located at the reference desk, consists of materials that need to be consulted on a frequent and regular basis. The Librarian(s) in charge of Reference, in consultation with the reference bibliographers, selects materials for placement in the Ready Reference Collection.